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NCSC announces first census of nation's problem-solving courts

National court nonprofit seeks contact information for all programs

Williamsburg, Va. (Jan. 14, 2013) — In preparation for the first census of America's problem-solving courts, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) is assembling a database of contact information for all justice-system programs that focus on the underlying chronic behaviors of those who appear before the court, and is asking for the court community's help to ensure that all such courts are represented.

The census, which is scheduled to launch January 30, 2013, will compile an accurate count of the number and types of all state problem-solving court programs across the country, as well as develop a clearer understanding of problem-solving courts. The census will inquire about the social issue being addressed by the court, the population being served, and the types of services being offered, and will request data on funding sources and case processing.

"We are excited to embark on the first-ever census of problem-solving courts currently in operation, and are putting forth efforts to ensure that no program is omitted from the census," said Nicole L. Waters, Principal Court Research Consultant with NCSC and director of the census project.

Problem-solving courts, which have experienced exponential growth in recent years, generally involve a single judge who is devoted to a specific type of case and who uses pending sanctions and incentives to compel defendants into complying with treatment. The judge works closely with a community team to develop case plans for the defendants, which, if followed, avert jail time or other punishment.

While drug court is the most widely recognized type of problem-solving court, other examples include mental health, veterans, homeless, and teen. For the purposes of the census, however, NCSC is using an *all-inclusive definition of a problem-solving court*, and seeks to collect data from all programs that offer components or elements of problem-solving courts, not just those with certification or those that fit into pre-existing designations.

"The census will benefit the courts in several ways, including serving as an indicator for determining the need for additional funding; establishing a network for peer-to-peer support and mentorship; providing baseline data to identify future trends and growth among specific programs; and providing for more coordinated evaluations of problem-solving court programs," Waters said.

The data collected during the census is expected to be released for public access in late 2013. The census is being funded by a grant from the Bureau of Justice Statistics and administered through a partnership with the National Drug Court Institute.

On January 11th, NCSC contacted all known problem-solving courts by e-mail to alert them of the upcoming census. If you represent a problem-solving court but did not receive this e-mail notification, please contact the NCSC Census project staff at CensusPSC@ncsc.org and include (a) the name of the problem-solving court and (b) the name and email address of a contact person for the court.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts. Founded in 1971 by the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, NCSC provides education, training, technology, management, and research services to the nation's state courts.

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